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Book Notices.

BARTON'S SEMITIC ORIGINS.¹

Since the publication of W. Robertson Smith's great work on the *Religion of the Semites* no similar treatise has appeared, although much new light has been shed on the subject by archæological and comparative research. Professor Barton's book is an attempt to gather up the results of the most recent investigations in this field and to present them in systematic form. There has long been need of such a discussion, and its author deserves the thanks of all Semitists and students of comparative religion for the thorough and painstaking manner in which he has gathered his materials from widely scattered sources.

The book opens with a discussion of the problem of the original home of the Semitic race. In common with most recent investigators, Barton rejects the theories that it is to be sought in northern Asia or in Babylonia, and finds it in Arabia. The further question, whether the Semites may not have migrated from some other region into Arabia, he answers by the theory that there was once a white race dwelling on both sides of the Mediterranean. In consequence of geological changes at the time of the last glacial period, Europe was separated from Africa, and this race was divided into south European and north African. The north African subsequently separated into Hamitic and Semitic. The ancestors of the Semites found their way into Arabia, where during thousands of years their racial peculiarities were developed and fixed. Subsequently the great Semitic migrations—Babylonian, Canaanitic, Aramæan, Nabatæan, Arabian, etc.—radiated from Arabia as a center. This theory is in accord with the best and most recent results of ethnological and philological research, and is probably correct.

The second chapter is devoted to a discussion of primitive Semitic social life. The author's conclusions are thus summarized (p. 80): "The Semites, perhaps as early as the time of their separation from the Hamites, had reached the animistic stage of culture, and formed totemistic clans. Their family relations were exceedingly vague. Marriage was for a short time, women resided in the homes of their own kindred, and descent was reckoned through them; the killing of female infants created a paucity of women, which produced a condition of polyandry resembling the Nair type. At the same time there was much sexual irregularity, which was regarded as innocent. Out of this there grew, through the formation of small trading clans and the influence of the

¹ A SKETCH OF SEMITIC ORIGINS, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS. By George Aaron Barton, A.M., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biblical Literature and Semitic Languages in Bryn Mawr College. New York: Macmillan, 1902. ix+342 pp. \$3.

capture of women, a system of Thibetan polyandry and, later, a system of male kinship. Perhaps at the time of their separation from the Hamites, and at all events comparatively early, they had entered the pastoral and semi-agricultural stage of culture, in which the cultivation of the date palm played an important part." These positions are learnedly defended by a comparative study of the social institutions of the various branches of the Semitic race and by the analogy of similar institutions in other parts of the world. There is no reason to take exception to any of the conclusions reached. The author here follows closely in the footsteps of Robertson Smith in his *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*.

In the third chapter the more difficult subject of the origin of Semitic religion is taken up. Starting with the proposition that the religious beliefs of a people are always the reflex of its social condition, the author concludes that the primitive Semitic deity must have been a goddess who was the analogue of the polyandrous mother of primitive Semitic society. This deity he finds in Athtar-Ishtar-Ashtart-Ashtoreth-Astarte of later Semitic religions. She is a polyandrous goddess, the patron of unwedded love, the giver of offspring, who is worshiped with sacrifice of chastity, with circumcision, and with offerings of the first-born. Her son is Tammuz, but she has no husband; and the male element plays as small a part in religion as does the father in the matriarchal form of society. The name Athtar he connects with 'athâr, "irrigation channel;" and concludes that "Ishtar was originally a water goddess, the divinity of some never-failing spring or springs, and that some sacred tree to which the spring gave life represented her son." This view he defends by a detailed exhibition of the importance of springs and trees, particularly the date palm, in all the later Semitic religions.

There is certainly much truth in this view. The early Semites must have had mother-goddesses analogous in character to the polyandrous mothers of the clans, but it is doubtful whether this conception exhausted the content of primitive Semitic belief. The latest investigations in the field of comparative religion make one chary of tracing religion in general or any particular religion to a single source. Usener in his *Götternamen* has shown that primitive Aryan names for deity are nouns of action, and that anything that is able to do something is deified. Originally there was an indefinite number of gods, and limited pantheons have arisen by the selection of certain deities to be great gods and the association of minor ones with them as epithets. Hopkins in his *India Old and New* has shown that new gods of every sort are made daily in modern India. It is not likely that the Semitic mind worked so differently from the Aryan that its religion started in a unity and subsequently developed a variety, while the Aryan started with a variety and subsequently developed a greater or less unity. Most investigators hold that the primitive Semitic religion was polydæmonism, or the worship of an indefinite number of heterogeneous spirits that were localized in all sorts of physical objects. The sex of these spirits was determined partly

by their functions and partly by the accident of grammatical gender. There was no such thing as one Ishtar who manifested herself at various places, but any local spirit that was feminine was an Ishtar—in Assyrian Ishtar is the generic name for “goddess.” Barton admits all this in theory (p. 81), but he makes no use of it in working out his system; in fact, he constantly speaks of the “mother-goddess Ishtar,” as though she were an individual instead of a generic name. Even in a matriarchal stage of society it is not likely that the male element was ignored in religion, though it may have been subordinated. Children had fathers even when polyandry prevailed, and there were names expressive of the man’s relation to the woman, if there were none expressing his relation to the children. The counterpart in religion of a polyandrous social organization is not the recognition of a single female deity, but the recognition of female deities having a number of spouses. Barton’s identification of Ishtar and Tammuz with the spring and the palm tree respectively seems also unnatural. The life-giving water that makes the tree fruitful must have been personified as masculine rather than feminine, and the fruit-bearing date palm must have been viewed as a mother rather than as a son. A more natural theory would be that the date palm was the primitive mother-goddess and that the water, the sun, the male tree, and the winds that brought the pollen were all regarded as her husbands, because all contributed to make her fruitful. This would correspond with the natural phenomena, and also with the habits of thought of a polyandrous community. However this may be, it is improbable that all Semitic religion goes back to the worship of a mother-goddess Ishtar.

In the fifth and sixth chapters the author studies the transformations that primitive Semitic faith underwent in south Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, and Assyria. He shows that, in consequence of the change of society from a matriarchal-polyandrous to a patriarchal-polygamous form, the primitive mother-goddess was frequently changed into a god. Thus in south Arabia Athtar became masculine. In Moab Ashtar-Chemosh is not to be regarded as the Ashtar who belongs to Chemosh, but the Ashtar who is identical with Chemosh, as is proved by the lack of feminine ending. In Phœnicia and Babylonia also traces are found of a male Ishtar. Ashur, the god of Assyria, is a male form of Asherah, the symbol, and then the synonym, of Ishtar. This is all true, and doubtless the change is due to the transition from a matriarchal to a patriarchal organization of society; but when, on the basis of these facts, Barton makes the sweeping generalization that all the gods of the Semitic world, including Yahweh, the God of Israel, are transformations of the primitive mother-goddess, few will be able to follow him. That Enlil, Ea, Sin, Marduk, Ramman, Dagan, Hadad, Baal, and Yahweh were all originally feminine cannot be proved, even if it could be established that the primitive Semites worshiped only a mother-goddess. Barton has got hold of a useful principle, but he tries to make it prove too much.

The chapters on survivals of the Ishtar cult in later Semitic religion and on the influence of the Semites on the non-Semitic world are full of interest and contain little to which one can take exception. However one may differ from certain of the author's conclusions, one cannot fail to recognize that this is an important contribution to the study of Semitic religions. Enormous labor has been spent in gathering the facts, and the constant reference to sources in the footnotes makes the work invaluable. The book is interesting as well as learned, and the general reader will be well repayed by a perusal. For students of comparative religion this will surely become a chief authority.

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STUDIES IN HEBREW METER.¹

In this second part of his *Studien* Sievers gives the metrical examples promised in Part I (see this JOURNAL, April, 1902), together with some remarks extending or modifying his previous position; in these remarks he makes acknowledgment of the kindness of Professor H. Gunkel, who has gone over the examples and offered valuable suggestions. In Part II, as well as in Part I, Sievers has declined to accept emendations of passages that, though unintelligible, are metrically good, and has generally refrained from indicating by dividing lines the independent parts of chapters; both these procedures he now (in his added remarks) thinks mistaken. Certainly a metrist, when he is illustrating or seeking for principles, should not introduce emendations except where these are correct beyond all question; but he should always indicate corrupt passages when they are cited, and it would be better to omit such. Sievers's additional remarks relate to the septenary (7-beat) line, the retraction of the accent, geminates before s'wa, and the accentuation of segolates at the end of a verse. The septenary he now regards as a specially characteristic and typical form of the narrative or (what he looks on as the same thing) the popular poetry; and (in agreement with Gunkel) he retains such lines even in poems that are wholly or predominantly senary. He, however, holds this view of the septenary as only provisional, to be tested by further investigation; and, in fact, his illustrations do not appear to be convincing. In Gen. 49:8, for example, *a b*, which in the text he makes ternary (by omitting אַחֵר), he now takes as septenary (retaining אַחֵר). But here *c* is the proper parallel to *a* (*b* is interpolation or gloss), and the two are clearly ternary. In vs. 13 of the same chapter the first הָיָה is inappropriate, is wanting in the Septuagint (Codd. ABF), and should be omitted; there remains a satisfactory ternary couplet. The retention of עָרָה and the second אָנִי in Deut. 32:39

¹ METRISCHE STUDIEN. I. STUDIEN ZUR HEBRÄISCHEN METRIK. ZWEITER THEIL: TEXTPROBEN. Von Eduard Sievers, Mitglied der Königl. Sächs. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften. Des XXI. Bandes der Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen Classe der Königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften No. II. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1901 iv + 196 pp. [numbered continuously with Part I, pp. 404-599]. M. 6.